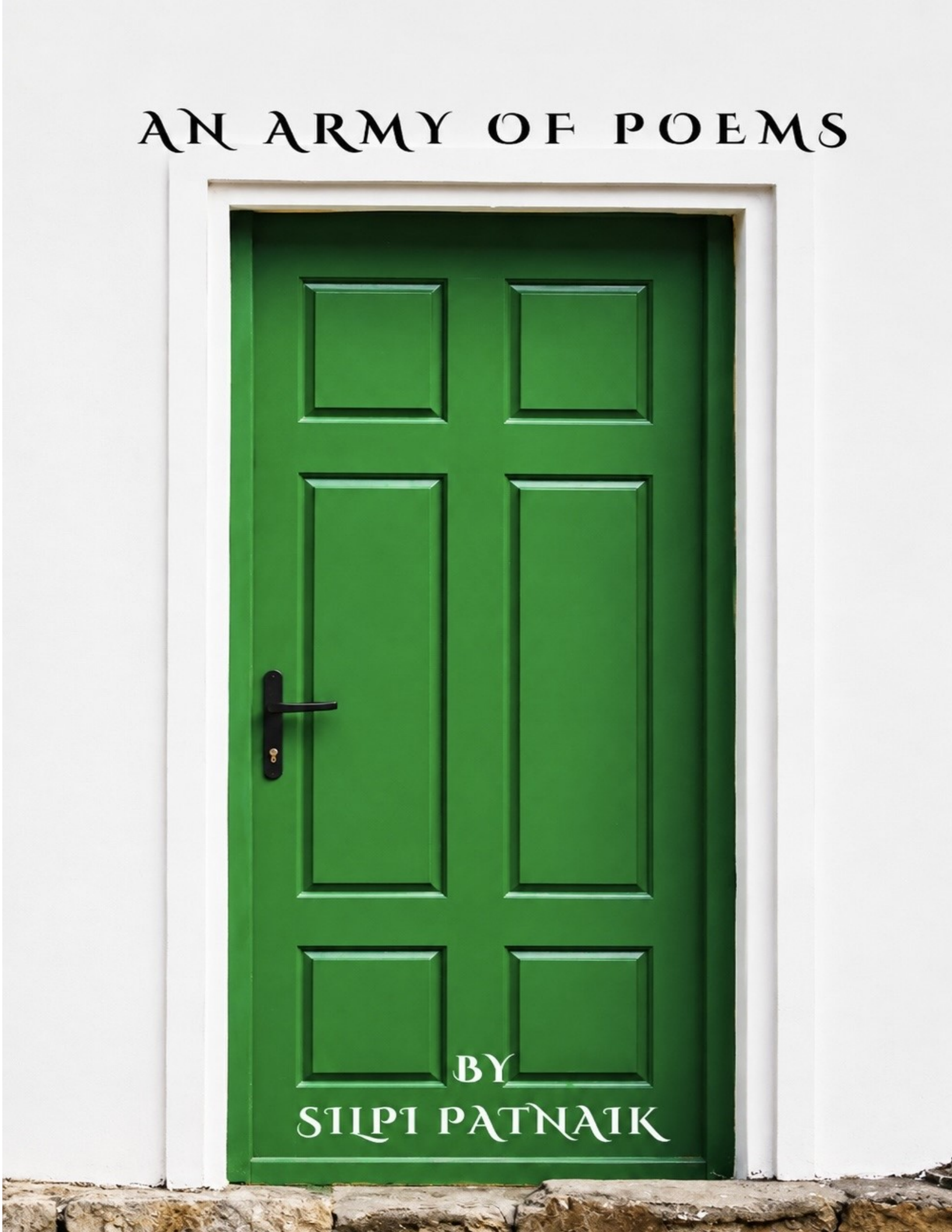
AN ARMY OF POEMS



BY

SILPI PATNAIK

An Army of Poems

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Foreword

A Power, which dwells left right centre, tells me
in an intimate conversation--

When your heart is gagged with information
and cracks all over in small stinging smiles, then
don't bandage it-
tend it instead, know that now is the age to recycling it.

See the tree in you and
eat the ache as fodder, and
wait and wait and wait-

Recycling is being boiled with tribulations-
bested mind, caponed senses, boned intentions-
bleating like bankrupt drums in the hot chambers
of everywhere-

You succumb to the lava of nature, you die.
But by chance you keep rising up in the dawns, keep
warming your tongue with java, keep moistening your rued ribs
with sprinkles of Hemingway, keep writing one true
sentence everyday, keep postponing the plans of
of giving up till tomorrow and

keep stirring the ritual as a cruel religion
then under the ruins of a moonlit night
you get poached into a cockroach
and you know no better than to seeth, fly, flutter
else
how do you hide from the chase of a futile day?

In the hiding you write your may song,
night after night
you feel like leaving your rays behind-
and so you write now, not with passion but
abandon

not with a pen but with knife

not with heat but with fire

not with the skin of your teeth but
with hunger-

you write
and yes ofcourse, as per the natural course
an army of poems
heralds
from your recycled heart and
like Noah's raft carries the world
to a more trustful port.

Silpi Patnaik

.

Allow myself Letters

Since all arms are too busy for embraces,
i find solace in dipping
my hands in my head and purveying caresses
like raw doses of vitamins- i scratch the stale skin
of my mind,
flaky in need of conversation and, rind by rind,
I turn an organic red onion
gyrating between warm palms of papers-
the snake sheath dusts up, skirt by skirt, and
food of words drop from the eyes of my soul,

Words that were squeezed under the
overgrowth of skull-

Words and words form up, maskless,
like raw red
cashew apples leading to the crowd of my country-
dusty, chalky, yellowed with the
spittle of vehicles, bruised by the dance of nature,
sun-dappled, wind-harmed, so nasty for the
urban hands,
yet it's bread for the ravenous Buddha.
Gingerly, the steam of words so satiating that
it splinters the oyster in my heart-
crystals of 'uffs' release and part from the
purse of my lips.

It's okay I say. Let the world lose its essence.
I'll still strip my existence and write letters
to the lonely ethers,
to the meteors,
to the dead and bright stars and
allow my hungry human self a page of intense

heart to heart.

An Interview with Confidence

When the greed for struggle dwindles
I invent myself as a seed in an apple or
split
into the plumes of a peacock or get locked in the plates of weights
greater than my failure-
and although I wear a calm fuchsia on my lips, I too rip into
waters and nerves-
in the maverick showers of April or in the hormones of the moon
or behind the oak of the powder room.

Yet a month or two is too soon to harness the milks and syrups.
Yes, Patience blinks and drops into a baby blade,
squirming in the wax stub, behooving me to give up,
give up, give up !
But like gold times, I hold the torso of the tallow- the flame tamed in its pulp-
and stretch it as far as I can,
till it thins into
strands of silver, filaments of sugar
and rays my face, blazes my mind.

Crisscrossing the stems of light across my nimble fingers,
I play with them- embroider, sculpture, rear words on the fallow fields of paper,
I forget the fear and employ each block of my cell
in tasks that havoc the architecture of my construct-

As the last leaf of December
the final drop of life fails to kill itself. And
from the scraps

escapes one hungry shaft of ember.

Artist's risk

Yes! an edifying voice propels me to be
non-judgemental-as if that's indispensable to be humane-
but isn't such an absolute bestrewn with hazards too- the risk of
unfeeling-ness, emotional paralysis ?
Prolonged practice of calm
might curdle me into a phlegmatic or ferment me into a lunatic !
I'm appalled
I run the risk of lodging as a germ in the pus-filled protoplasm of the
popular world-
like my neighbor who got his soul sarcophagized in his steak-waist or
like my colleague who saves the surplus in her neck... or may be
like many denizens for who diseases is the euphemism for richness-

Exactly like them,
I might benumb into a ringworm - and savour the excess
of sluggishness, of *no-time-ness*.
Expose me to purity and in a jiffy I too will incinerate-
I too will be allergic to Nature and intelligence, and I know,
like my sick bandwagon I too will fatten up, so flabby
that I will be alien to conscience,
stranger to Empathy, High Thinking, Simple Living -

Logically, non-judgmental
might mean befriending filth !! It's unthinkable!!
At the price of my spiritual health, I rather be inhuman and cling to
this glassy, cheese paper version- this chipped star, terracotta,
water version-
yet a person whatsoever- transparent, un-turtle, perforated-
as long as I get affected, I will boil,
bleed purple and lacerate-
for
aren't these scabby slits the actual mouth of the artists'?
-the lip from which the fruit, hut and cloth sprouts?

Bougainvillea

That day when
my grandmother was a page away
from her epilogue,
the bougainvillea she had smeared on the wall-
curl-haired, unscented heroines, decked to the nines-
were fevered.
Unlike me, they knew the decade of tender care
was losing vogue.

Within me, ambition was skyscraping, creeping
vigorously in profusion
Croissants and capers were novel mistresses. To hell
with *story-full* courtesans-
no matter how well they sing, “local is lentil”,
unexciting, banal-
for me
they were paper flakes of memory
in stopovers between London and Japan-
‘tween English hams and Parisian buns-till my
ambitious feet runs into a bower of Roman bougainvillea,

Roman bougainvillea
draped on an ancient palazzi-
exactly that crimson *saree* carpeting the
famished walls of a castaway era-
an extension of the betel-themed lips
of my granny,
leafing out offsprings of tradition.

My arms were a pair of proud trunk,
which rose, with devotion, beside the juvenile creepers
of foreign airs,
and lapped at them with fervour of a lover,
snapped this delicious memento and capped it with a hash
“*hey! Magical find of my roam”*-

and some stray soul brandished a comment
“*let’s meet up, seems you’re back home!”*

Beaver

Faintly, very faintly
I remember those mutterings of my
tapering great mother,
a teacher-turned-gardener

"*We work, work, work*
to hold our world together.
Each one works to hold his own-
one by one
the date of death is postponed
by a century-
and in the rink of this hundred
we cling together,
assuming the shape of a beaver
and carry the date by a hundred further."

And now at fifty when I envisage age,
not with multi capsules, but spools of skunk vines,
basils, jasmines, chamomile
I could decipher why she
was criticized for not being pious and
ostracized for being sensuous with the rough grasses!

Tell me my pious pals !
how can I pick the cymbals, the candles,
the virgin flower and beseech the rich God
to poof my pain, anoint me powerful?
Shouldn't I grab the wherewithal
of my trade, instead,
and cut my bread from the rock of work?

Tell me my over-zealous, religious folk
for isn't sincere work for Nature, as doggedly as a beaver,
the only kind of grand worship?
the only life-grip in this rancid sea of mortality ?

Bird, Really ??

During juvenile years,
no sooner the bone-chilling exams were over, I roared
“Oh! Now I’m a free bird”,

But with age I shudder to use
that metaphor anymore.
I know, a paltry swallow or hen
in a wink can be gunned into a game-
while a laundry of wings
can be quite challenging for the hefty frame
of ostrich or falcon-

But behold me-
with the benediction of
Will and Choice, it’s I
who can spin the stain of fate
as a daffodil or a mum-
I can plait the mane of my pain
as a song or a poem-and also
I own, unlike a bird, the gems of words
to eke for my position
and, on the map of my palms,
stamp my own decision-

Yes, that's the reward of age. With age
I don’t believe the grass on the side of birds
is any greener than the verdure on my lawn-
‘coz the only one
The Only one born free is none but Human-

Beauty in Morbidity

And when Anne Frank journaled
“there is beauty in morbidity too”, I practiced shirking
cynicism.
So I ballooned my heart and skimmed for beauty in
golden tresses of American fries, in the refined mattresses of
engineered pizzas, in the grandfather burgers
as generous as omnibus-
but my elastic heart lost oxygen,
for this bloody Memory pricked a pin-
Memory that’s larger than my brain,
And

Memory kept spilling out, recklessly in
sauteed beetroots, radish skilletbread, lentil crisps,
black rice, moong sprouts-

But I whacked my
Brain -that stove in the den of my head-
and pleaded it to loosen its rigidity, to see beauty in morbidity-
Yet again bloody Memory bellowed, bubbled, throbbed-
whistled like naughty pressure cookers
up on my stove,
and the steamed moth-toned lentils frothed from corners-

I got down on my knees,
with ungloved hands proposed my love
to those gung ho yellow streaks
and the whole shebang was messy, dirty
yet so beautiful in the spillage,

that I had to believe-
Shouldn’t beauty always spill?
to mangle, mingle and smoke into this universe,
and to stroke its forehead with abundant kisses !

Ohh how dubious this whole scene seemed !
the plumage of pizzas and its parrot partners-
how they never spill but sink into

cozy cages in our innards,
and we are so luxuriously stuffed and layered
that there isn't a pore ajar
for beauty to even peek or wink-

And they think I'm crazed,
because Lord! So much spillage,
so much sticky rind, so much unkind spices on two-faced skin,
so much fins of fishes in the prism of sweat, and
the stinks of temperings, the weight of pestles, of dishes foaming in rattles-
So much Doing
working, imagining, seeking the essence of Nature,
sharing the fabric of your existence, living, loving !

Need I say "I'm not crazy !"
In fact- I see Beauty even in morbidity.

Believe

With vehemence, I believe
it's serious matter to be alive today-
So when you pay your courteous smile and ask me
"how are you?"
I sense the teeth of a chill cut down my spine. I bite my tongue and
swallow those three perfunctory "I am fine".

"I'm fine" is far from genuine.
Instead I'm in a frenzy for I wear this round of diamond- Today.
A currency to acquiring countless
facets, the infinite, the unknown-

for instance today
While two traders scratched each other's visage in penny pinching,
I was stunned by a grasshopper, perched beside them,
in the solemn act of praying;

Today, on my ritual visit to the grocers, I was thrilled to feel
between my palms the novel array of Oriental cheese-
also Today
I met a sacred corpse, wreathed and reticent,
dancing on his altarpiece-

Isn't it hyper serious to be alive today??

Yes, I use my mind as
my current account- like I'm paying a cent
for each thought and it must be well-spent-
I use my body as a bunch of grapes
strewn under the feet of an infant- and my hands are farmer's hands,
my shoulders are of a soldier's.
I'm serious about the clay cross yoked within me,
from blade though blade and head through toe-
I'm serious of the many eyes that grow after the two had lived the mundane,
'coz hanging in there could be my license to be here
and still be
everywhere-

So a hurried response “oh I’m fine” or the chimes,
seems unfair- like I haven’t paid obeisance to life for
turning up for me, as a comrade, yet again,
yet again-

shouldn’t that be a stinging sin then ?

Comfort Food

Tonight your breath
hushes, gushes,whistles, whimpers
sizzles in snores, eddies in simpers,
like a glove, fits into my blood temperatures-

A gourmand I become, 'coz your breath tonight
is a cousin of rum.
when like rocking rivers
it cascades down one rusted pot of thick red rice from my farm,
gurgling on the stove
crazy with creams it can't contain-raving and rife,
a loud approval for life,
a hearty confirmation hugging me with a damp warm...
making me greedy for the taste of earth.

Tonight your breath is exactly that-
an indispensable sweat of the village carb dome
parboiled and plush,
necessary and nude...

ohh how, seven seasons away from home,
I find my new comfort food !

Char Woman

when her sundried willpowers
were greased with the moisture of his snores,
when her blunted energies
unhooked the other's better earth
through lawless doors,

when she lapped away the largesse of air and
somniloquied to him in an eclectic language,
when she bunked her she-ness and was an ever-growing
vine in her partner's tangents-

it was like drawing cash from a bank.

Like drawing cash from a bank
she took kinesis from the dam of his breaths
and was so enriched in this recompense
that for her
tomorrow were a fiction,
for her
dreams were on a vacation.

One whole sound sleep beside her lover
was her method to being a rhino-hide survivor-

Crime of Love

Time-
Can I sew you a dress?
a picture, a letter, a poetry, a recipe.
Or a bigger fit, more precious-
a book of history speaking of grit
or a drape of minakari jewelry or sort of Virginia Woolf's diary-
Or a gaudier look perhaps
in the sparkly hairs of cinema or in the beds of a
Pattachitra saree-

But with every cut and size you seem dissatisfied!

Tell me, Time
how can I rise above this crime of Love and
nidify an ideal alcove, where
we grow old together?

See
from past graves I've the paraphernalia ready-
albums, cameras, novellas, operas, murals,
marbled monolith of glories.

Yet till date you never reciprocated
my proposals for a sweeter fate ?

Though rued, I continued-

and now when I'm fingers of a tree
I can see you through the railings of my body,
must I stop??

But Love it is !
In fret, I freeze you in the cradle of my tomb,
but alas I sink into your womb
and, in a pendant, a certificate,
a fridge magnet,
in a great stone and then in a sweater of crops

you drape me instead.

Crone Biology

A bunch of hips she was,
But went weaker with the evening fries.
“Thai chillies, sharp shallots, puffed rice of India
married with broken samosas could be nirvana”,
she licked her thoughts,
and the carpet of her face crumpled, like hot dried laundry-
Although she expects an adieu any hour- yet
she craves roses and sweat,
she craves to hold her baby lungs
and fling it into fresh country air and then fix it back even fresher,
but the air conditioner is such a tyrant-
makes her a spider.
And though her palms shine with the french kiss of petroleum, yet
She craves another glimmer-
of metal weights and crackling abdomens
of trysts at Venice, at Greece, with Mexicans-
before everything is moths and musks,
She craves to tell her tales and show her map-
a scent of her age, stamps on her page-
But Children and Listeners, like foliage, are myths !

That crone Biology bullies her with smirks-
But like an old pal she smirks back, entwines with her like a snake-

she picks her reedy oak stick and pierces the piggy bank of chronology
and down pours the savings of memory-
she mudlarks flock of samosas
stormy oils, notorious ghost spices, gregarious samovars-
together they are potlucks of ventilators-
now, now she talks tears, hears her noisy nose
and tastes the footprints of her heartbeats-
and
thus with the money of memory
she buys one more day-
another epilogue to her story.

Culture

Over madelines and mousses
we can compose swan songs for our dying culture,
play a game of blame after serving our non-native masters-
Or
one dusk
we can choose to hang out with that trunk, shrinking as a violet,
in our garrets
and rescue one malnourished Benarasi of our mother,
mummified with the flesh of labour and love-

now, travel using Maps and Wayz, into that
circle of inferno where low-fed seamsters,
like a guild of woodpeckers, chant with their machines.

With a touch of fear, you offer them the bread and wine
of your imagination- a print of trims and slits, fits and laces
to eke out a blazer.
and you wait with a plate heaped with patience, because
the shelter of love and labour is never mass produced in
loveless conditions-

at the long last when you enter into the palace of a
Benarasi Blazer
masoned for you by tailoring new rules of richness,
how do you feel?
an underprivileged connoisseur who loses out on Gucci, Fendi
Or
a greatly responsible, powerful saviour,
who wears the cape of grit?

Can Culture ever die if I refuse kill it ?

Chores are Doors

I would rather be a servant of my lot
And save myself from being the poor master
of a mule-like bot,
that usurps the fruits of
moping my home, scrubbing grim socks,
mollassing tea for my family-

Those aren't primal rituals
bearing my frustration- neither am I
stung by some socio-political dictum-

I do it for a higher reason-
with each sun I'm back at the outset
of the labyrinthine-
A chore is that gate where I say open sesame
And, sans any uproar, it unfurls like a pregnant seed-
I sail into the palatial spaces with
each ring of the process-

Each ring, a pink and fresh sepal, a milestone
torn sideways in a regal fashion, chiseling away
path for the adjoining chamber-
like a guardian engineer,
leading me up and up to my very own
treasure trove-
which fairy fables claim as hidden
in some abysmal alcove-

Perhaps, the master inventor
of temples and monuments
was also a worshipper of routine

like me
must have been so drunk
with Freedom
that could've never imagined sacrificing
this most prized possession
to falsely intelligent skunks.

Child

Let the age in my certificate grow old,
I will taste the world
with the tongue of a two-year soul-
As I imagine my fingers unformed
I'll fold this very world in a dough,
unroll it and ogle at its carnival through
a tapioca pearl-

where nothing festers in a mould and bears a name and
I'm not yet a Pavlovian dog-
I'm still free from the thick skinned fog
of conditions
and like me
a chair is also free
from being nailed as a wooden furniture-
It might as well be a cavorting lap
or a bottomless cup-
likewise
a book
could be a dancer in a mood
to riffle and flutter-
or a conch, with its spires and whorls
and a lip as a door
could be the ancestor of temples-
or a human body could be a vase holding
pellucid water- black in wrath, red in passion
white when wise, yellow in joyous emotions,
and this tree of a body could be a bonsai universe-

A possibility indeed !

Isn't it so senior Yeats!
Isn't there more enterprise in walking naked?

I hatch ways to undress the world,
to purge it from too-much-made face -
so that

I can gladden myself with this newness
in shame and rain
in gloom and pain-
and
fresh perceptions shall not be reserved
for university lessons, bought at some stark age
when time is leaking,

or by billing
out pages of cheques for
the tricky act of shrinking.

Drug Store

The pride of my senses,
renaissances into my drug store-
I avail it with fervor- copiously, optimally-
For instance,
my tongue can see gaping holes on the mat of my body,
hungrier than my mouth- I know sloth is easier and unfair.
instead of dropping grains of medicines
in that bottomless pit,
I choose to water my pores with the sun- this March sun
which is in profusion today,
which denies neither the predator nor the prey-
and my eyes dilate as bowls of paradise,
which collects only ambrosia-

like Today
is an exotic braised pilaf, with arias of organza clouds
addled with anxieties of fat squirrels-
and the tunnels of my ears, like gates of Elysium, open up
to accept benedictions- a cocktail of roses and reek,
tumble into me,
as my private Niagara-
my lungs like long tongues of frogs, gather the
sumptuous vitamins- and
courier them down the palms of my feet-

know what ?
my frozen, ferrous deficient, varicosed veins crab up
and cup joules from the heart of the earth-
and inject this forage of electricity
ounce by ounce, to an un-glazed me-
how?

Through the tummies of
thousand empty minds toddling on my carcass,
begging for food to the world

greedily-

Destiny

Of course life-conditions aren't instant meals
cooked with a sack of my green grocers' raws-visible, palpable,
cut from my pocket and, hence, Mine!!
They are in fact a community porridge-
I might have chosen farm grown brunette grains but the
frozen lentils of a glamorous slave,
frustrations of a vaped teen,
palette of butt ends by a popcorned artist,
sleet of dreams of a handicapped athlete- all river into the
reticent stew of

My Present.

Of course the porridge I consume Now,
isn't sweaty, fulfilling and
is bound to startle me with its unsoundness.

Need I be disillusioned?
Very much Yes.
For I had been army cautious with my share of grains-
ate my sweat and nestled them through seasons,
ran them under warmest of waters, pruned them prior to
sliding them into that prim well of the wok-

Hell! my eyes were zoomed in, too close to the whites.
Nearness softens the details- like proximity blurs the truth-
Was it "My" Porridge after all ?
Was it just "Mine" after all?
I hardly knew the milkname of this Community Stew-

"Destiny" it was...Destiny has a Destiny too-

destined to be a cesspool- a rancid pot of chic contributions-
of midnight cheers attesting American dreams
of beers and beefs that salve the bruises of creamy jobs,
of self-inflicted divorce from moon and sun and streams,
of such cold inertia that Life may be a portrait of death, and dollars is faith-

if dollars can be saved then to hell with minds and lions !!!
and this… all of this mingle into the smog, mist,
crowds of the city
and make their way down into the Stew
being stirred under the butterfly wings of Time-

and I merely chime…

and I wake up each day, regardless of my wariness,
to a breakfast bowl infested with
eggs of roaches- perfectly invisible
having travelled through infinitesimal holes in
my solitary flue-

my solitary flue- but who knew it shared a love affair
with my neighbour's gruesome flue-

Empowerment is Choosing another Country

Hey You!
You with a dagger, with a turban, with a vivid psalm
on the wall of your head, look here !!
I'm a woman and I eat the cow,
I masticate it- brisket, steak , all cuts
my favourite-
and I lick the ribs too, i lick the sirloins pink -
oh! what a relish!-
I smack my tongue and I laugh at you-
heee-heee-heee
for not even the tip of your finger could reach me- because
I've ditched the high roads on your map,
where you would've skeined me into yarns for
even a curious question 'bout the cow's skin-
all this had i been on your soil-
your soil which was also, ironically, mine-
Don't you dare accuse me of brain drain or
say my patriotism is dying-
because this is much more than a mere Americannah-
much more than a pursuit for "I wanna emancipation!"
much more than a portion of feminism or the quest for freedom-

I will never strain and explain choosing "Dignity",
it might be too queer a vocabulary for you-
Though I'm ashamed to say and show,
yet show I will- so
You, look here, look with your two distilled eyes,
here goes so much of your honourable political vittle
into my female mouth-
and let alone stamping me under your uncouth feet or
naming me your private cattle or teaching me virtuosity!!
in your patch of helplessness, you can only seethe
for you can't even imagine touching me!

Eel

Like that handsome eel, I too will become the
content of comedy
beside the white laughter of the sea.

Like that eel, packed with oils and soul,
I too will beg to be hoisted in two big fat arms and
whispered a word of love for having performed the
act of life sincerely,
to be prayed dearly for peace, hereafter.
To be veiled under the earth, with a wrinkle of afterthought,
and thus honoured-
the cremation frosted with a dash of silence, a promise,
albeit false, to be remembered,
for all the panache I could have flourished on the pan of world,
had I gotten a chance to serve it a smidgeon more.

But all this is porcelain wish fated to be unfulfilled
for I know, like the eel, purple and crisp,
I too will reek at the cusp of shore and sand
and
an unkindness of overfed children,
for who all toys have expired, will poke me with a stick

as if I'm a diffused balloon with a memory of wind or
a plastic snake redeemed from an online fair or a decoy of their
own joyless existences or
a smash cake meticulously customized for the practice of death.

and Of course, like I,
instead of housing the eel in the cemetery of my hands,
curled my blinging nose, preferred to hate the rot, turned my shirker back
to the beautiful gore of nature,

Of course exactly like me, my erudite progeny
will run away from the sight of
my cadaver.

Emu

It was the singular emu the butcher possessed
amidst a warren of hens, ducks and quail's eggs-
as if the emu was their father- a father
held hostage for unpaid debts-
and he chose not a vermilion or a vulgar red,
but a petrichor brown for a heart-
that could blend him with the ground and also send
telegrams to heaven to redeem him
before his innermost is unclad-
before his children watch the sun in his loins,
the universe in his pelvis, the sword in his legs
sold in cubes and parts-

such was his stellar stamina that he lived
in there corralled for years, till he epoched into a
landmark- until
"oh! that emu-shop behind the park!", we referred and
with our eyes nibbled on its pride between our buying and paying-
we watched away, day after day, while its ageless body
weathered and wooled, got stung by ravages,
yet like a monument it grew young and young,
till so long
that the babies stole him- held rim to rim,
fed on his bones and tendons and savoured the property of his blood,
peg by peg

and as the final dregs of dark were polished out,
between shouts of orders, we saw, in the charged enclosure,
no emu anymore- but a vacuum of expensive dust-
albumed with a silent storm-
refusing to be destroyed,
refusing to be replaced-

Expectations

Expectation has etiquettes too,
yet for a month or so- but then like a
finger-monkey
it spouts from my ears and mouth, and hops pell mell-
an uncouth, indomitable- an outlaw despite control.
But it's a monkey after all- should it be straight and narrow?
Should it bend, bow and behave beautiful ?
I try and rein it with the rosaries
between my fists and acupressure it under my heels-
alas it slips and does its garish dance, kitschy to my near austere eyes-
I bite my tongue, pull my hair, pluck the overhang around my fingers yet
fail to cage the insolent in run-
In desperation, I'm just more aware of my schisms, my stench,
my barbed perimeter,
yet I bear and
I let the monkey jitterbug---
I throw my hands, hug it in its dance
and guffaw like a maniac-
For in my pursuit to not to expect
a cent of love or a feather of compassion,
I could hardly see, that ironically,
no-expectation is expectation too

in reality-

Easy

Easy is
to shut the scullery of my eyes
the instant a flamelet of anger incenses in the stove
of my abdomen and
to skedaddle into the bookmarked images of
Khajas of my native-
which I usually fantasize, as a prize, after I've dined on
the prescribed dose of poison.
Khaja, like Turkish simits or conched pretzels-
splotched with lights of sugars, bathed in a gold lustre,
the pleats of that peacock-eyed wafer
soaked in the seasons of pitch black cardamoms,
essenced in the unconditional embrace of two full pods-
spicy, whole, essential like the
irises of all the Lord's Lord. and in giddy swirls, the photo strip
of my romance with *Khaja*, like a molten lava
of one-string syrup, bubbles up

to the rim of my mouth, to the split where
both my lips knit- and the word I utter, despite my anger,
is "Sweet", "Oh so sweet!"

Though the stove in my abdomen stays bloodwarm,
yet like a brief dance of the final fumes,
doused by an ethical fire-eater's sprays,
that scalding emotion of anger
bangs loud and passes away-

Easy, is it not?
Distancing, day dreaming,
And just like that, by busying myself, I tamed the talons of a sin.

Everything Bagel Seasoning

Of too many two-faced staples in this luxurious system
I choose to be fearful of sodium-

So (in the pockets of the store) while I adored that sexy
Everything Bagel Seasoning
to dress the guac of my mornings, it promised, along with
sesames, onions, garlics, poppies,
a swell six percent of sodium
in as little as a dab, a modicum-

And I know, salty promises, like everyday instalments,
are devious in their sum-

I read. I read. I bleed when minerals are ravished by my greedy kins,
and stashed down the slim vials of my skeletons-
my soft bones, being human, especially woman, gingerly learn
to accommodate the assault of salt-
They ache and bake and implode, daily yet idly yet noiselessly, into
a load of cockled dust-
as a cost of wrath of earth
to the earth I return, yet return in haste-

This isn't a very tasty truth-

in a jerk I slid the pigmy shaker in the rack and
bought, just for a cent, a quaint sachet of desiccated onions-
other ingredients, sure, lay higgedly piggedly
in my pantry's niches and unattended regions-
In forgotten bins, tins, cups, jars
like you my reader, I too stuff offcuts and leftovers

Yes yes like you I owned every matter for the concoction-
what I moaned was inaction
against procrastination-
an intolerant voice against commercial conditions-

But how much does it take to wake, if not a shake?
if not a leap of faith?

I emptied an old shaker and poured in grains
of seeds and stalks-
plus, not a shock of salt
but, a wee bit only
collected from seas and rocks- and in the ready,
like an intrepid member of cavalry, stood
a spice amalgamation fortified with
intention-

On the placid castor
I calligraphied in highlighter , bold as my decision,
‘Everything Bagel Seasoning’-

for as infinitesimal as a farthing-

Fate of Stories

Now I know
when I read Marco Polo or Primo Levi or Alexander,
how stories can be tools of change- not tranquilizers,
not sweet atom bombs, not bread of fear but the
palette-pleasing voice of revolt

so I encash little
insubstantial events from my past and dole them
piece by piece, to my daughter-

they gradually metamorphose into legendary
fables, sometimes seasoned with a pinch of salt or
a surprise element or a faint moral scent or a conundrum
that behooves to be unravelled
or an open-ended question that may disprove perception
or sometimes
a lingering silence that's protein diet for young mind-

in all cases, a clean transcendence from the Present-
when time of bed fails to ensnare her within that
day and hour
or bind her to contemporary conditions-

Punch drunk with nutrition,
she swiftly slides into sleep and wakes up
slightly decrhysallized-
Like
She might recede a trifle from the virtual sea
or gravitate towards fruits for her sweet-tooth- or
she might want to star-gaze or resist the desire
for yet another toy bear that’s just excess or

She might ponder before communication and harvest silence.
She might explore the limits of imagination.
She might see virtue in slow and steady not to win the race
but to find
beauty in the journey.

Feminist Mother

We are all acquainted with the mother
who was a swell pot. But it didn't take long
for the feminist mom to ramshackle
into a pot of diseased crop-
primed and painted
yet so medicined that giving up
is what she meant-

But then
oh my! oh my!
like a forgotten insurance of cash
her child dashed in and dropped
as a lush wad of sun on her weary firmament-

the child smiled
unfurled bold queries about the old world-
That why should age bog under a figure,
why shouldn't age be unstoppable
as a feather, a hare, a spring of crisp water?
Why not if age is extension of Nature-
the weeny wings of interrogations, like the blooming beams of Helios,
flourished
and
bloated the roots of the sodden pot with the magic of
nourish-
piping food of bloody excitement, bloody amazement

life shot up- a video in a timelapse,
one green by one green- then
rows of pink hovered atop the lows of pain,
wriggled their heads from pores of limp soil,
and coiled in galores-
in limbs, on cheeks, in chest
as an unrestrained epidemic of revival-

"*I'm a sticky substance*",
to a nihilistic mother, whispered Survival.

Father Dinosaur @Royal Ontario Museum

A julienned fossil of barosaurus garlanded as display-
jowls agape, cored eyes door to nowhere, crisp fingers splayed as a tray
in thin air, as if
begging for alms or posing questions or
waiting for answers on its palms or just wishing to unite
hands with us
as a welcome of eternal cessation.

Each possible gesture- a reckoning that
past is actually future-
that how well we preserve us from the
maneuvers of Nature,
Bones,
an imperishable calendar, will only remain-
Want or not, our tale will be told by itself
down the generations

exactly like father dinosaur's-

And
In the still house of our breasts, a trumpet ventures
which echoes the
unbandaged ruptures of an open faucet, wails of papers
undressed from torso of towels, yelps of elevators like
an ambulance in a cemetery, ire of gadgets that were fashioned
to be puppets of humanity!

But
like every moment of truth this uncouth
music dies too,
into lines and scales and scores.
Yes the remnants of the trumpet does look like
a twin of the

fossil dinosaur-

Fireworks on Canada Day Celebration

From the wombs of anonymity
they bloomed, boomed, zoomed,
flaunting their fragility,
deluded that they are magnificently independent-
Like demi-gods
mad to placate their beloveds,
they roasted into perforated laces and entertained us.
They rowed, elbowed, frizzled, struggled
to hold special place in the hearts of their dearests-

Speechless, we binged this grand performance-
Yet for a fraud moment!

Yet for a fraud moment they danced and, in a jiffy,
were devoured by the land, forgotten immortally,
graveyarding the house of this universe
in smokes and cinders

and also
a charred silence, that smelled like a “What” to each viewer

“In the mirror of a clear sky,
What
were you staring at?
Frail fireworks and their macabre danse or
The most candid face of your own existence?”

Gift for my Parents

Some of the most rich gifts for my parents would be

a pair of suede gumboots and helmets,
plus an enrollment sheet for the sleet cleaning shindig-
Now, can their mind reap time to
wince over elephant legs?
Like an arrow that's not just concealed in a quiver,
but is meant to be in a quiver too
their calves are well stretched in their homes, now less tense,
and have complaints only a few.

Their heads have shrivelled like winter woods.
For the radiance of a fire, I would kindle a flame of
Immortality,
with a proposition to develop a dictionary-
say of recipes of convention. Not just to please them or ease them
but to stitch the gaping hole 'tween now and then in one
meaningful bridge.

Or
buy them a shack that's not a designer casket
where the sun is not a shy guest, but all doodles and shapes
like I used to be.
Where frozen food is headlines from the green man
round the corner. Where the attic has a frown, the
garage is rundown, the garden is anemic. Aren't those
hungry hands craving to create music?

Let them get down to the floor, like people of glorious times, and
get to the business of personal invention through
some miraculous renovation-

Because nothing that's in use can reek of mildew-

Instead of cheering my shaking parents to
shout “screw Parkinsons”
I can give them a truer gift-
a ticket to a country of my creation- a country that
doesn’t deify doses of medicines as meal portions
and lays out, like victory cards, an array of provisions
to prevent the onset of diseases
in the first place.

Growing Up to be Happy

what is happy actually-
if not suffering intensely and, like a bankrupt leaf,
falling on the ground face down-ossified, offaled- purely hopeless-
so pinched that the next possibility could only be
a coin of growth-
of some trivial kind though- unnoticeable- intangible for now-
for tomorrow-
but the day after you sure lead the first foot of the ascent
on the craggy trunk of the world-

Yet
The World-
a conscientious gravedigger, skins you, wrings you dry-
so that you never shoulder the baggage of contentment-
so you never rot on your rocker or, ragelessly,
melt into the folds of your comforter-
so that like the world, you too suffer,
and keep braving the notches, the tilts, the street up the soar-
from that bone of autumn
to a finger of spring to a heart of grand summer

and

due to force of habit, still keep pining up to kiss the ethereal,
till you are so tall, so big that the equally big world
can hug you whole
and whisper

“finally I’ve earned my kindred soul”-

Grumble

Grumble is just a process
like bush walks, like distance,
like dervish dance, like coffee,
to come in terms with dishonesty.

It is hard for a genuine to be hunky dory
with betrayal being the ruling season!!

Won't the honest feel strangled when
the love you believed on as religion
reveals to be a priest of payslip?
or when you discover
that special letter you drank as tylenol
was actually the spit of a robot’s bleep?
or when you figure out that they had
bandaged your bruises,
not because they cared to pieces,
but were scared to be banished to
hell !

Well! Gumble is only natural.

Honesty, like hypocrisy, is a disease too,
sans a chance of treatment.
Eventually it slouches towards coexistence-
May be lurching through the cobbled path of
Grumble,
an honest heart learns to thrive like its
evil counterpart,
and never gets enchanted
by its profitable other-
exactly how leatherjacketed Hypocrisy, sans a shred of ruth,
never gets stirred by the feathers of truth.

Gold

But why didn't you confide in us that
You reside in the joists of the February sun,
That the address of your genuine face
Is in the stems of fenugreek, sprouted and vitamined- and
those who seek your soul, for them alone you have been
A dime a dozen-
I was stunned when
In the tropics I saw you run
In the veins of tuberous turmerics, a smoldered orange,
Golder than twentyfour carats- and

The other day in the forest
as I cracked a freckled egg of the quail
to break my intermittent fast, You, You
descended down, a meteor in stupor, from the
ceilings of a docile sky-
It did stupefy me-
was all that lucre for which I had cannibalized, barked
and galloped after without a holiday, a lie?
Yes, may be 'coz
in the periphery of Asia when I glanced the
belly of the horizon tear apart,
You
fountained down on my floor.
A purse of hope was upended for me.
You drowned me in luxury and said "spend without measures"-

and

with every border I crossed, I brushed shoulders with You-
not in euphoric forms, but in terms unspeakably simple-
in molten molasses, in tresses of sunflower yards,
in spools of Manuka from the bees, in the daywear sarees of the seas or
in the yarns of saffrons
won with courage from Istanbul, or
the sandalwoods, the cantalopes and pumpkins split open
straight from its nesting tree.
a proof of how intrinsically free you were-

And I, so epically foolish
I caged you in rings of bondages, in
heritage bracelets, in biscuits for an heirloom deity and
locked you in the heart of walls where even
Gods can't stalk-
mummied you in trunks planning immortality
for my family tree.

How couldn't I see that all I ever lusted for
was your shallow body- meanwhile you were lavishing
sacks of love on them who
sang with you, swung with you, lived with you
and loved your soul

unconditionally.

God beyond God

But then there must be a God
Who isn't born
at the dawn of Thursday and doesn't fog prior the
gong of midnight,
making way for another bright to shine
and reign for the next twenty-four-
calling it a day before Saturday,
So the opposite number could get his share of play-

And the dance of Gods have been happening such way
along with the dance of earth
So meticulous, methodical, professional
Gods- who measure coconuts and castles, chokers of shimmer
and books of songlets
to ensure the world is embalmed in entangles!

But then I'm talking of a parallel God- that concept,
that light
I'm sure You must have heard!
that dwells
beyond dates, coffers and
cute conditions- beyond pews, mats and ablutions-

Come let's try that unloved God-
how romantic and nomadic
how conventionally indisciplined-
in surviving his workaday, gaunt and non-expectant,
perfectly detached, perfectly alone-

Yes, if we imagine soul, if soul is what we are mad to touch
and feel and attain
Let's not be scared to try that God-
Just for the sake of Freedom that's our own,
A Freedom that we own.

Honey Comb

It is only when I take pleasure in my pain
that I can live through them- because
no amount of devotional incantations or
rituals or prayers or coffee or poetry or
silence or meditations or sleep or overthinking
will loosen the leash of angst coiled across
my throat.

Unfortunately I have to respire
and all struggles against the coil is a war.
Because it's made of matters beyond my
comprehension.
The only way to survive this pandemonium is
to breed tastebuds for difficulties.
To enjoy the wobble. To glare at the mysterious creatures
I encounter during the rough navigation. To strike a talk with them
and lose myself in their sketchy tales.

And if they sting me or scratch me or bite me,
which they most certainly will, then to get astonished by the way blood
escapes from my body-
soars like a parachute, gallops like a ferret, springs, sprays,
sometimes just sluices down, silently, going with the flow.

Yes the many hearts within my heart will taste fate,
my nose will be violet,
this marble-sized mind is compelled to crush and crumble
like a brittle cookie.
But Love is known to enfeeble mountains and free oceans from gravity.
Love is known to turn dust golden.

No it’s not chemistry, it’s Love that’s indeed the philosophy
behind alchemy.
So this time too Love will do magic for my beached self.

I will love the ugly, the dire, the unbearable.
And this love, unconditional, will make the jigsaw cuts of destiny
endurable.
And when this passes away, which it will, I would be cowered and bent,
yet mutely sparkling like a heavy comb of honey,
inviting the whole globe to come and

take a lick of wisdom.

Hope

Can I call it an iridescent insect
that spawns in throbbing sacs of space-
those fertile bags of time that open up with Yoga-
in building lungs of a crow, a scorpio or a leo-
waving slightly against the routine tides
cremating some cheap human lies-
and I see, behind locked legs of my nose,
eggs of Hope develop-
I anoint it with commands of belief and I expand the sac
with the clinic of my hands.

How?

I go and stow ten beans of Espresso-
an orchestra of Arabica
ground and pound- I hear the butcher's cleaver
liquify and rain down- gingerly
piercing through my rhino-hide and murdering the
tough nut of pessimism,
paving macadam for endorphins-
Meaty hormones rush in like oxygen for the
zygote of Hope-
now brimming with a brash pulse, I suppose,
as fresh yellow stars, flailing and finning,
waiting to stick to roots of their own,
imagining bulbs of faith-

Right here I don't give up, instead I mother the embryo

How?

I walk up and unlock the hot universe of
calisthenics and deadlifts-
my old body crumbles into smithereens,
and is strewn like things in a trash bin
across the ocean of my blood.
The train of sweat, like an acid rain, chars the
termites of self-disdain,
that keep breeding, as herrings, beneath my sheath-
In this clear petite fjord,
Hope, with its emblazoned winglets
proliferates-
and now as my inner district is rearranged,
I can actually see beyond the litter pails, the flimsiness
of ordeals is in sight and I can devise schemes to fight-

Like money generates money,
Hope, the honey of life, breeds itself,
in the parenthesis that stretches
between vitamins from sun and
Rumi's hums- Yes, and
Hope swarms in the warehouses of
my head, for now it's festooned with an army of
glow worms-
under its auspices every "not"pupates into a "nod"
and every battle tastes possible.

Home

Never did I know
my soul dwelled in the center of my knees
till it bombed apart
and I was handicapped
when the king of virus got you in seize.

amazed I pondered where do I love you from?

From
the maps and lanes that seep in our veins
in ticking off dream places or
from the sticky food of anecdotes we smear, every dawn,
on our slave-stained faces-

from the ribs of naked nights when our
transparent child ices in her limbs, or
from the vent of eyes we uncork on each other
anywhen a God tramples our hymns-

from the armour of hands we offer the other
to be calm Romans in the game of deranged expectations or
from the tabernacle of shoulders we lamp around the other
when shortchanged by evolution?

yes, could probably be the spaces I love you from-
but especially

from that one region which gained form
when we joined torn pages of our palms side to side-
and from the wide atlas of random lines genesised
sticks and poles and loam-

with slats and joists of our hearts and fates
We frankensteined our home.

Healing is Cheaper than Beer

Those “Sometimes”
when healing may not be dwarfing down
into cans of beer,
but walking up to your green grocer and
buying, for a dime, one netted sack of
clementines-

then
perching on a high stool in that district café,
right against the pane overlooking the stage of the streets
and not ordering craft beverages, but
peeling off the baby oranges
in sluggish swirls, round and round-
the rind unveiling garishly as a ballerina’s dress, and
peg by peg, smooching sucking
the fleshy poetry in the slices-
together with your tongue, teeth, hard palette
in this warm bath of relish,
till the ninety sections, like nine cantos of an epic,
finish-
and then
rising up, dusting off and walking away, step by step,
getting smudged into the crew of the large cinema-

Meanwhile the hill of yellow peels
heaped aside your window
breeds a slew of lives
and keeps exuding an irresistible aroma.

How to find a Friend

And the otherwise rude world
bared before me her bloods and bones,
as I showed at her doors
naked of plans and phones.

Will, as we know, could whittle contaminations.

We willed the atmosphere to be rarefied
and it did.
Through the skin of sheer air we both could
hear every salt the other dropped,
while still rolled in our very own natures-
creased pantaloons, frizzed hairs, beleaguered.

Sincerity is a grand present-
For in those sincere take and give, give and take
moments
the ravaged world and the damaged I
fermented-
grew eyes for the other's dents and flints-
Not before long- two untended, two untamed,
famously rude,
turned dearest of friends.

Intermittent Fasting

I ignore the mirage of even
a wedge of bread or a finger of milk ‘coz
one ilk of dawn and from the kerchief of a hard night,
I would theophanize as a stint of magic-

as if all the zephyrs have coalesced into a pair of fans
and are shouting Thanks from the flanks of my ribs.
Although phantom wings yet, mind you, the energy isn’t fraud.
We don't always have to possess
a streamline slice, a cone of a bill, a splay of nails to be
the fit owner of freedom.
An authentic feeling is legit property !

And sometimes
what a costly locker can’t fulfill, an empty tummy does-
It steals gravity. I can

swoop and swing and sing, right there within the radius of
the black market of life and still never feel enslaved
in its affairs.
after all that's what humanity had been craving
since eternity,
whenever it slurred, with a sludge of pains and dreams in throat,
”wish I were the image of a free bird!”

Love of Labour

I pressed Time between the
machine of my abdomen,
grilled it into coarse amber sweat,
and
only then did it yield
pure juice in the
pit of my tumbler-

Now I can sit with it through
thick and thin,
and it fits me perfect for hours together.
It couldn't get colder anymore-

Time has always been my reverend deity-
I had to invent some means
to surmount its infidelity.

Luxury

From the palm-spunned ceiling of bamboo bars
treasure-bags of linen, healthy with sprouts,
chandeliered as suns.
A stove emerging from the uterus of clay,
grey-bodied and cloud-throated, claimed
to be the star

of this rustic kitchen-

Serious cooking for the day being done,
the kitchen was now busy trying to rest.
But purpose was a habit.
Although in leisure, it was still ready to be put to use.
So much so that
even after the saga of profuse
chaffing, popping, whirring, enlivening
for armies of farmers was finished and
the kitchen, a tad famished, was
cleaned, garlanded, entreated to be silent,

yes! It did remain silent.

Yet in rapt silence it still emitted the
cinnamon veins of a raconteur, humming away its
odyssey,

though unknowingly.

And like this Kitchen, anything unafraid for
self-preservation, elevates into a luxury.

For it's an art to escape
the homicide of history.

Ladders of Roots

When you speak, dear pal !
my eyes too are ears-
like a journal of petals
for
they listen to more than what you
speak-
the hard complains and threats,
the fears and their shards, the
squeezed dreams and many-pronged meanings
pressed under facades and guards-

and when my eyes blink
they are in tandem with the pauses you make
to think-
my eyes-your words, my eyes- your words
like wind and leaves, survive in sync,

Each time you speak
my eyes bloom as the bowl of a flower to
home you in embrace
and then may shrink as a thorn to drink
the shoals of your distress-

And
when so ever you speak to me,
whether in riding joy or in sagging grief
you would feel like hugging a tree-
with a life and a name.
For my eyes via your eyes
unfurl ladders of roots into your heart
and listen to your heart through them.

Love

Ohh how Light, the monarch of arrows,
genuflects to the woes of skies
and
cracks into rainbow hairs!

Even Air, the tzar of power,
reddens in the breast of a robin or gets
imprisoned in a pumporgan's home of prayer !

Then
How could I, a sheer cloth of soil or
at best a moth-eaten star, dare
circumvent the lacy nets of Love ?

For isn't Love a messy affair!

Magician

Where is that portrait
you meant to uncage from your sleeves? Or
that booklet of sonnets you dreamt to theophanize
from the kerchieves of your palms?
Tell me where are they?
Perhaps plans, in their clay forms,
like foetuses, waited long to gain a pulse-
but starved
they shrunk into crisps of charred skin and
lodged in your apathetic underbelly-

If you a woman, that really
answers the imbecile cycles and
you guessed you were defeminized by brute December !!
Perhaps why, you man, your heels were
emasculated with a stony heart-
and you gleaned it's abrasive shoes,
sprints on the treadmill of real estate-
Perhaps that's why you hear
eerie tremors- sinister trills of toilet-flushing,
and you infer it's the neighbour's incontingent bladder !!

Dreams when archived
curdle into ghosts, and reside
with the host-
you should have known that, magician !
But you were disempowered by the Future of your child !!
Yes Future- that ubiquitous serpent in the bend of time
which embodies as a wild buccaneer,
a highwayman-
It takes you hostage
and all the while was propped right beside you
with a cleaver pressed to your throat !!

Well! Well! in Justice’s court Someone had to die.
That’s been the deal of life, precise and smart-

And you Magician, You
couldn't even beg, borrow, steal a gorgeous coffin for Art !!

Millennial Daughter

Everyday, without fail,
a girl of nine
brewed tea, twenty-two cups precisely, for the
fine fat family-
also folded desiccated onesies, bibs of her
suckling siblings,
and when mom erranded to
swing by the grocer for cumin, ginger, salt
like a nimble cat she did-
Also,
also with the falsetto of the hours she
tidied the filth of foods and
brimmed stout ewers with municipality monsoons-

Come the hyphen of a leisure,

like a blind egg
she begged to be incubated with
a hot hug from her mom and a single feed of
"you are special" poured into her fledgling ears.
Yet she didn't know this was the diet
she vied for
till

She was a mom herself and
for no rime or reason,
hugged her nine year old at random nows and thens and
filled the pot of her sapling ears with a hearty broth of
"you are special" "you are special"-

Always serving the stew twice,
not to be extra nice- but playing mother twice.

Most Impactful Book

Reaching the Union Station once
to board the Niagara Go, I remember how I was cowed down
imagining a two hour twelve minute ride- friendless.
Yet with a sullen face, I hurried
elbowing the morning fury- and breathless
I suspired.

My eyes shut, my eyes rose, it was as if I was
theatered -
the swarm fell apart in two rows
each human- the soul of a portrait, was distinct from another-
a determined student with Shakespeare clutched to the chest,
a mauve-shirted girl in the church of her coffee,
a suited high profile someone who couldn't afford a leave, a stiff pair of Indian parents puzzled with right and left,
hardhatters licking the drizzle of respite,
surly lovers, jittery backpackers,
slack spouses, cops with hearts, walkers, wanderers!

A lone watcher, I was sandwiched in the gutter of
two neat leaves of people, like a stick of desiccated rose
slid between chapters-
Each human, a classic jacketed book- an unlocked hold.
The station unfolded into an open bibliotheque,
where the single rule was relish 'coz the books were
printed fresh, hot, unread by anyone-

the further I walked,
in excess loneliness, the station kept splitting apart
like the fruits of a divine pen-
head of a pomegranate,
trunk of a July jackfruit and the many wedges
squeezed in the white lemon of everyday sun-

and yes

I felt the prick of scales in my eyes ‘coz
Loneliness was going under a knife,
was acquiring the new face of a dervish-
- now at home under the shelter of my skin-
finding a meaning everywhere, everywhere at peace—
and there, that noon, at Union Station
my
Loneliness was reborn as bliss.

Obese Pay Cheque

As long as the needful, the untainted,
the quaint is my exotic,
does exotic demand an obese pay check?

For doesn't something
as modest as a bowl of turtle beans, like foie gras or caviar,
oil my joints and muscles?
or
an escape run across the greens flanking city streets, like a personal lawn,
water my soul?
or
an alliance of cotton and my skin, like an elite curated design,
embrace me whole?
Or doesn't
a halo of space
Either in the community parkette or at the everyman's bibliotheque,
like a private zone signed as mine and mine alone,
propel me to fulfill the task sitting on the chair of my palms,
firm and tall ?

So I ask, to serve the purpose
for which I am born,
that for which my life must be at stake,
that quaint, which is indeed exotic,

does that exotic demand an obese pay cheque **?**

Popular

If you are popular with your conscience
then isn't everything else
a gross drama,
through and through ?
and
if you aren't popular with your conscience
then isn't everything else
a gross drama

too ?

Poi Leaves

She slunk into the womb of the garden
and chose, particularly, japanese fans of Poi-

Like loose leaves of a sheaf of sonnets
She spread them on the chest of her palms and
bathed them in blood of waters
as maternally as she had bathed me forty years past
and then, gingerly, she sunned
their dappled veins from tip to the stems-

like the sluice of a cat
she landed beside the cave of a mortar
and packed it with rice,
germs of cumin, a thumb of ginger, a stick of thin chilli
and stamped them together
stamp-stamp-
her callused fists not very different from the postmaster's
and she stamped indefatigably, eternally
till the stony well was wealthy with ivory matter-

She folded the poi leaves- a letter of love from her to us-
drenched them in concoction like a virgin paper is
waterlogged in the rain of first love
and sealed them so thick that
not a drop of emotion could ever leak-
and then one by one by one
she formed the plume of a peahen on a quasi-hot pan,
and told us
"*Patience is a gallant act-*
but isn't belly a battlefield too and
this pantry a hoary tome of history? So let's not be rash,
let's fight with some tact and teach the past
some gallantry…"
And while the poi leaves exhaled in vigors, in snail pace
I watched her patience travel from
equators to unkind winters
and the poi leaves, the ageless epistle, travelled too
unbruised, uncut

from that trembling side of the skillet
to this side of the pan-
and the flip awakens in the arm of a spatula
in the grips of my hands-
"*continuity of history for four decads and running*
is also a fine act of gallantry!", I tell my daughter
as I tip the pan and serve the letter
on her plate.

I'm sure the Poi leaves will incant to her
as she tears them and glares at the
gelatinous substance-
the boat of her mouth pregnant with oils,
She wishes to oar through the sea of t and
hear
more and more and more
'bout the life of this adhesive stamp of my grandmother-

And I know, I know
with this letter of a recipe
She becomes Culture and lives happily
atleast in my forever-

Piggy Bank

When I love,
I feel to the extents more than maximum or

when I read,
I become the script to which the words are strung, or

when I travel, I walk as if the street is an epilogue of my feet or

when I bake, even the quaintest of biscuits, I wield the whisk
as a magic wand-

or for that matter

when I wait in a queue or brew a dirty chai or
feed the sty of sprouts or
knit a pendant nest of poetry
from the fagends of an unfair life,

i believe in each of them like a prayer
recited a breath before
dying on the gallows-

that's how I save loaves of hope
in the wallet of my body
to eat on days when the fire
refuses to lit up-

Powerful Parent

When the child astounded million buck blunder
of spilling an ounce of milk from the china cup,
in an instant, that parent incarnadined into a dragon
But I remember thinking-
Isn't a child a guest of this world, still orienting
itself with the many-fold ways?

Wasn't spilling the milk
a preamble to gravity and balance?
also a preface to the god of liquid-
tickling surprise at its amiability.
a tiny journey of awe
when the serene white silhouette became
the map of a face, then a rabid cabbage, then a crumpled moon,
then soon ravaged into a streak of tear-
and also the dance of the silk spillage,
the chance of a wave to free from the ocean's cage
and the warm kiss of a violent splatter, like
a sudden monsoon in the middle of nowhere.
And also the call to mop with
the untrained hands to revere divine order-

Now when the drama of enigma descends,
the child truly graduates into the bloomed moment-
a clear floor once more,
an older child born within the child,
could peer at the certificate of a freshly printed face and gets startled at
how it shimmers after the celebration-

Ohh! What divine lessons in this blend and blur
of emotions and definitions.

"Can't you see?
A kindle of education for a morsel of milk !
and you didn't even stick out a single cent",

I remember itching to question that powerful parent.

Religion

Little bristles of March sun broom my curves and crannies,
clear the dust bunnies of anger, envy,
and make room for bigger, better things.

Something
that's melting outside, is also melting within me-
the roiling blood of nature, may be. It flows
like a school of moonfish,
spilling oils, that knows nothing about
parsimony or restriction in giving.

Even on such a grandly mundane day, if you happen to be trapped
in your December, then hey!
come to me, unflinchingly,
not just for an urgent clove of garlic or a pinch bowl
of sugar,
not just to return an old saucer or that
mauve cup,

but also for a fillet of hope- the first catch of season.
For I've sufficient of it roped in my net,
and I'll serve generous portion on your plate
without
any hidden agenda for a superior gain

because regardless of seasons my friend,
Sharing
happens to be my religion.

Recycle

Depends upon what you see in that
senior teapot- gone pear-shaped, loose, overused

a dated furniture, dressed for adieu from your zoo
or an immortal vase?
that can mother
not only lipstick plants and antler of twigs, but
even shells of your dried sick blood,
clots of your rarefied hair and the onion skins of
heart to hearts that would've otherwise strewn orphan,
like precious wings of butterflies

and also

it could be a pocket
for a gift of orchids as you pass by and be the muse
for a shy artist in your home, or play
a centrepiece in new children's charcuterie and
be the pen of a basil bush, that performs nurse for
centuries to come

so much meaning for what you see-

and if so you see, then just like that
you antique a saint from a wrinkling teapot
and save history from
kicking the bucket.

Raincoats

Even this could be a scrumptious cuisine
to savour a scene-
For instance on this day of unannounced rain
not being brain-fogged for having forgotten a perfect raiment
for your young kid- for which
She had to slip into a waist-length hoodie as a
last minute faith-

Is it a sturdy case to self-chastise ?
isn't the jacket afterall precise to shield the feeble rind and
cheat the illiterate wind ?
Should you be dismayed for carving the same story from a
different knead ?

Or instead
you be scraping spices from the variety !
where some kids had donned umbrella hats, some
others prim in waxed leather coats, some coquettes held fashion first
and wore gaiters in polka dots. And also boys in reeky rubbers as knave
as the factories,
and
infants packed in mom’s dupattas, bubble-wrapped in
indian love-
Perhaps the cherries could be those bare-headed juveniles
with dreams to romance the drizzle and
the shrivelled adolescent in your heart could recognize this sizzle.

Will it still be a routine rain, you
aching with guilt and care?
or under a bedimmed sky you rather savour
a live theatre out there ?

Storyteller Tulips called-

Emperors, Ballerinas, Parrots
catching age, hour by hour
weight of stalks and bulbs-
a slow reek of weed peeling in the air—-
and time jaywalks at a stop
a spurt of petals give up,
letting go the nipples of their mother-
the floor is a page of history suddenly
loose and free
they are fleshy as my mom's ghee-
and under a low sun, ohh how they turn
into coloured photos of raw candles in my temple,
prayered on the gold altar—-
how Nature too has relations, I think,
sharing common stars- those with age
shift and look similar-
precisely like
mothers and daughters-
—
And I look at the heartbeat of my clock-
may be one strike more- and
the mother petals will clay down
into their destination of dust by my door-
this dust will bloom
the destiny of daughter candles
on some random foreign shore !!

I will stare- what am I, I will dare to wonder-
mother of my mother
daughter of my daughter
candle or a tulip
passenger or a ship
or a relation of Nature- or
a viewer, a listener,

a troubadour???

Soulmate

Pink ravines on her body
bloomed in the Indian garden,
marooned(monumented) in the Indian garden,
so passionfully fried, so sun-dried,
that her old ivory skin
desiccated into a
filigree stencil -

the transcript of her wrinkles
skeletoned into autumn trees,
gradually
one free bone at a time-
And I think she didn't bother her
shaving away
for she was too engrossed
loving the sod and slime-

Eons hence, whenever
the hoeing was over,
the garden was dressed chaste
and
the ravens were groomed to ravish it in frays,
I would be stunned to see her
in the centre of greens, in the mid-act of loving-
limbs sunning out like May,
a purposeful corpse,
scaring the crows away !

Super Power

Do I truly need a superpower
to be adequate,
and then only I could best fate,
never be a shirker, a turntail?

or

mere enough power to meet the need of this hour
is all the might I require
to win and fail, win and fail, win and fail-

eventually sail

Thanks Lord

However offensive today may seem,
impassive to the call of home,
I will still be thankful to Lord-
-for birthing me human-
Not a
woofing dog or a mewing, rat-hunting cat- or
for cutting corners and pinching me into a
ggrrrrng-ggrrrngg housefly
with fake wings of freedom- or
the fish that laps-slaps and in a snap is
aquariumed-
For even when all the halogens of inhumanity gets
blinding,
unholy as Siberia, unruly as dystopia,
I can choose to refuge in my chapel-
I can choose not to be a cattle-
and as far as this little life permits
I can fight bullets, biologies, cold ears, pebbled minds
pelted on me and
never settle down even for half a human settle.

The Essentialist Poet

With an avalanche of cash
I was one wish away from gaining
power over anything-

Any-any-any thing-
it's tiring to enlist the names-
tiring to describe how my petite frame
squeezed and stretched and smidged
from a snail to swirls to slithers
in the galaxy of costly windows.

Overwhelmed, I was alcoholed-

Breathless, I leaned against the
shoulder blade of my best friend beside me,
who was nudging me for that little denim dress by
Laura Ashley-
"*won't it flaunt the motherlode*
of your thighs- also that
eloquent collarbone- flaming inspiration for
sluggish little Americans-"

With each word I felt the retail reeve loosen a bit- and
I orbited the planet of my head in the neck
of my best friend-
who also happened to be my husband-

I radiated satisfaction-

and decided to acquire possession only over
things I believed
were more indispensable than what I'm already
blessed with- lo! I
wasn't left much options than
a booklet of poetry and a ten dollar
Nespresso sleeve-

To my Parents

Parents,
Bequeath me an education that nourishes me with
Courage
to birth my system of faith when the seven sins are reversed-
when the first one is Compassion and the next is,nonchalantly,
Honesty, then Patience and
the next is to have a heart that rots sans passion
and then to bear a heart that does what it was meant for- to suffer.

Give me that unbendable power to differ with
Courage. With courage
to mother the questions
which everyone else has orphaned-
To go on breathing, burning,
singularly silently, untouched by the race-
and if need be, like the Polaris, revert each one from the routes
of fake life.

and also the
Courage
to make life, when hope, like a stale effigy of a dinosaur,
hangs by a thread.

Tree of Lions

Daisy, frilled, lavender- an army of
nomads' play- I bring some stray dandelions-
with butter shears and water from the udders of the tap, I
wear the hat of a florist. I set them
stem by stem
in new latitudes, in new rules
of architecture-
"*Love is being a listener*", I hum
and push the bower half a meter far from
my closest stance-

From this sweet distance, I peer at my
tree of lions-
I eat their free bread of transition, I loaf around and
stuff my wants in the wine of their transformation.
And I see
this constant tending, this needing, this hoping
this watching,
this bloody Participation, past thirty days,
comes of age and changes
into my ritual-
then from lifestyle to an unshakable religion.

date by date by date
it postpones yet another date of my appointment with oblivion.

Time Travel Contraption

For me

Memories.
Oh memories
a calm Shawl
from the loom of my city-

yarned with the veins of the trees,
embalmed with the preserves from the
cellars of Nature, that
defies the logic of finish, and hence
plumes through the rooms of Time,
always on hold-
indestructible as the character of soft gold.

Even if threads and filaments sift through
the mind's sieve,
they coin into the well of wishes and
shine into a new reason to live-

so Once
I fold and drape my
existence
within the cave of a Pashmina,
all bad, ugly, dire,
barred by the bark of the fabric, become
dumb audience to my nakedness-

Some criticize- say there are unresolved ties
or may be clinging to the past as a leech
or not letting go
or a breach in the motion of growth !
a template of downfall

I say "*but I just invented*
a time travel contraption as
simple as a shawl !!"

Unidentified Walking Object

And they gawked
an unidentified walking object in their precious place was news,
was breaking taboos, armed with ammunition of
Freedom-
had fibrous roots of wings in sets-

they are
“limbs” said archeological texts and sticks of human
popped up-
a similar one, a sinister one hopped loose on the streets-
doesn’t huff and puff at the sight of stairs and
refuses to leech to the escalator-
doesn’t bleach, like a dead moth, when the bot is asleep
And can squat, bend, sweep
its own creepy remnants corrupting
the carpet of nature-

Befuddled at this compassionate spine which
can sacrifice its stance,
the cute citizen questions,
“What’s those eccentric lumps of meat at both ends of its head?”
and intelligent morons concede,
“Ears, parachutes of conscience, shot for the arcane game of
Listening,
for shaking minds with minds,
for collecting, not air fryers and cars, but pains
and pleasures of all kinds-

But this wasn’t apt jargon for the pillow soft
populace!

Plus they had to dismiss the slow creature for
they were dead sure it would perish
in the avalanche of
mansions, moneys, babies-

As for now, they rammed
to welcome the baboons knocking with guns at their
portable doors-
badly delayed for queuing in the hearse of the
dance farm and getting embalmed in the furore-

Violin

Approaching end, as the day thins into flanks of
a vampire and cores me rubicund, in the bloody dark
I slumber by your side, as a log of autumn bark,
sore and insecure.
I wonder
how you broom your fingers down and up my nape,
not in conventional caresses, but in snaps
as professional as a percussionist's motions-

How gradually
your stint arabesques into the needle of my granny
spinning sweaters, rugs, paisley prints,
night after night.
I remember the feet of her fingers
silkworming with passion-
Exactly exactly your fingers imbibe her contortions.

Then as you crab up and up in tiny tucks,
your pinches mutating into plucks
I swim into the Pluto of that Flower-Ripper,
who plucked ninety moonbeams every dawn-
one by one, one after one
a priest he appeared, his misty wrists solidifies
into your wrists'
gesticulations-
bud to bud he went, with an intent as yours,
to smother his aphrodite with satisfaction.

Then in one whole swell of hum
when you sluice the branch of your fingers
across the length of my calcified spine, you ruin the tines
of stress.
Thoughtless I become vermouth.

Infused in music, in music I thrum.
the fermented dress of my skin now
a patterned *saree*, a moonbeam milky
lazaruses into a violin divine- and

your gruff sinewy hand, with its libation of love
terracotizes
into a wand of godly design.

Wall

I remember that wall of my daughter-
an immense riot of shapes were tethered in
random order,
as if the world had shrunk and acquired a method.

B'day bows of friends pasted in the fringes;
portraits of icons- Hermoine,anime, cinnamonroll hinged pell mell;
stills with mates whirred out by analogs; catalogs of post its; sticky cards of archetypal bucket lists,
also keychain burgers and squishy pickles cellotaped
to the plain breast of the wall
like stuff of dreams that could at least be upcycled,
and along with them spools
of haikus, bytes from dears, ghibili avatars,
faulty imagines laced in a lees of life-

But
not a trace of me was there,
not a touch of me was smooched to her
rectangle of Elysium- not a single quote of blessing
I keep spilling on her
or a complex rocket or a paper boat or
a pine cone
I keep feeding the flame of her brain
was fixed to the wall !
No, not a frill or fur of her mother was dimly visible

and
a stream of joy catpawed through the flute of my body,
a swelled heart rendering me fuller than full
because
I knew I wasn't merely
a unique leaf or a china strings fit to be drilled
on the wall.

For I was in fact the whole soul of the wall-

I was in fact the soul of the wall
which, like the Vitruvius Man was stretched and hobnailed
to stitch and suture the gaps in my daughter's hot mess

and choreograph, as silently as the cosmos, the systematic universe
in her chaotic country.

Writing is my Anodyne. What's Yours?

It's daunting
to write with no one in mind.
To write without anger, without hubris
without the need to press, impress or own-
But to write just as a vent and
not to mend anyone-

To write
without a shred of anticipation or
to be the reason of
flared cheeks and bloated bones or to see
a society up in arms because
of my words,
without expectation to be wreathed or wowed
or cheered-

But to write to cry, to rest, to unload,
to offer a home to my voice
which might otherwise roam vagabond- to bed
the unsaid, to shepherd my afflicted system
I Write
as an anodyne to recover-
not always Tylenols, Xanax, doped fries
do wonders- because not all are uninvolved with
dear life- not all are scared of strife-
so you write- that's the way I clear
the bridges of my nostrils, the maps of my cells, the
hedges of my head, the chimneys of many countries
brimming within me
without intention-

that's only when
my cogs lock together and I rock up
as
one whole nation-

Watch Yourself as a Movie

In anxiety
I peel my worn self from myself, hone a whole new entity
and watch myself, dispassionately,
tread the road of growth-
with apathy I view the pages of my story flip-
Like a mute beige moth gripped to the wall
I watch Diana pell mell in The Crown, or Orwell down and out in Paris and London,
or the old man best the sea or
even my greatest granny sprout silver yarns in her memoir of sorts-
In anxiety
I consider myself a character and, nonexpectantly,
watch my own lot

like Iwatch, without giving my two cents,
the stars shimmer and fade and shimmer again,
or lovers love and leave and savour the pain, or
watch markets perform and actors drop all guards.
I watch myself exactly like that, mimicking the heart
of a poised viewer,
with the benefit of a pair of grand eyes-
-as new as a child's, as old as God's-
move by move, I watch myself
tangle in the catacomb of sins,

and

each action I make as I wrestle,
I watch with aplomb- how I
pluck the hangnail, spark on the treadmill,
figure fear be the alter ego of game, feed narcissism,
read through cynicism,
make sweat the purpose of mornings and
love the intent of nights-
I watch myself fight with might,
accomplish, achieve
beef up in confidence, then diffuse in boredom,
and slower than slow outgrow the taste for maximum-
not like a heroine from legend
but like a genuine human being,

bound to be drenched black and blue
by existence-
I watch myself regardless I make it or don't make it through

And I give free pass to my fluid self to
row its anxieties, feel by feel-
For while it does so,
my solid self is stout- here there everywhere
living as still as soul, as full as soul.

Wildflower

You can pinch my paper skin or
name me names, maim me,
even crush me powder
for your mirth-
but can you ever enter
the hard heart of dad earth,
the lush hut of who I
birth ?
let me tell you,
im not praised as his princess-
im raised as his princess- yet not your princess regular !

okay stiff-necked ! So even if you squeeze
through the door
can the stem of your seemingly strong finger,
gemmed with power,
ever lord or loot
the sword-long root
of this apparently weakling
Wildflower ?

What is Happy

what is happy actually-
if not suffering intensely and, like a bankrupt leaf,
falling on the ground face down-ossified, offaled- purely hopeless-
so pinched that the next possibility could only be
a coin of growth-
of some trivial kind though- unnoticeable- intangible for now- for tomorrow- but the day after
you sure head the first foot of the ascent- on the craggy trunk of the world-

Yet
The World-
a conscientious gravedigger, skins you, wrings you dry-

so that you never shoulder the baggage of contentment-
so you never rot on your rocker or, ragelessly,
melt into the folds of your comforter-
so that like the world, you too suffer,
and keep braving the notches, the tilts, the street up the soar-
from that bone of autumn
to a finger of spring to a heart of grand summer

and,
due to force of habit, still keep pining up to kiss the ethereal,
till you are so tall, so big that the equally big world
can hug you whole
and whisper “finally I’ve earned my kindred soul”-

Silpi Patnaik, is a Canadian writer, poet, freethinker.
Apart from being a Bibliophile, a Travel Enthusiast, a Nature Worshipper, an ethical Recipe Developer, Silpi identifies herself as an existentialist on the path to being an essentialist. This ongoing journey has been highly turbulent and insightful.
Suffering was the process. A new heart was the result- A heart that saw unique and method-altering perspectives even in the most hopeless of hours. A heart that not just refused to submit to destiny, but also built paths to transcend the destiny.
An Army of Poems is a collective expression of these rare insights and experiences.
They can actually open up roads, pop up ladders, unfurl bridges or just embalm weary nerves in times of untreatable angst.

Silpi has penned a travelogue, *Puri- A Cherub, A Chanson, A Champion*; a collection of poems- *Masala Chai* (available at amazon/kdp) and actively posts songs and poems at instagram handle silpi.patnaik

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